

# City of Alexandria Open Space Steering Committee

Meeting #1

March 5, 2020





# Agenda

1. Introductions (10 Min)
2. Elliot Rhodeside, Rhodeside and Harwell (15 min)
  1. Background on the 2002 Open Space Master Plan
  2. Achievements since the Plan
3. Review of Steering Committee Tasks (20 min)
4. Overview of “What is Open Space” (30 min)
  1. Review of “Guide to Open Space”
  2. Open Space Inventory
5. Next steps (10 min)
  1. Review of current and proposed POS Zoning
  2. Review of open space in other jurisdictions and best practices
  3. Establish Meetings Schedule – Next meeting May 7?

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# Project Purpose:

This project aims to implement the Environmental Action Plan 2040 and Open Space Master Plan goal to **increase the publicly accessible open space quantity and improve its environmental quality, management, and social benefits** by identifying strategies and developing an open space policy plan.

## Tonight's Purpose:

Understand forthcoming tasks and overview of what “open space” means.

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# Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities

## Mission

We enrich the City of Alexandria by creating meaningful experiences through public space, cultural activities, and programming.

## Vision

We will improve the well-being of every person in our community by connecting them to each other and their environment.



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# Establishment of an Open Space Plan



In 2003 the City of Alexandria adopted the City of Alexandria Open Space Plan Master Plan, establishing 15 ambitious goals for protecting, enhancing, and expanding open space:

- **Goal 1:** *Protect and Enrich Existing Parks*
- **Goal 2:** *Develop Innovative Opportunities for Creating Additional Public Open Space*
- **Goal 3:** *Complete Implementation of the Potomac River Waterfront Plan*
- **Goal 4:** *Protect and Expand Stream Valleys and other Environmentally Sensitive Areas*
- **Goal 5:** *Create an Open Space Network in New Development Areas*
- **Goal 6:** *Protect and Preserve Institutional Open Space*
- **Goal 7:** *Protect and Maximize the Use of Public School Open Space*
- **Goal 8:** *Preserve and Protect Cemeteries*
- **Goal 9:** *Create Public Open Space from Vacant Land*
- **Goal 10:** *Link and Expand Pedestrian, Bicycle and Trail System*
- **Goal 11:** *Enhance Streetscape and Gateways*
- **Goal 12:** *Expand Citywide Street Tree Program and Protect Existing Trees and Woodland Areas*
- **Goal 13:** *Encourage the Creation of Civic Parks at and Adjacent to Metro Stations*
- **Goal 14:** *Beautify Interchanges and Highway Corridors*
- **Goal 15:** *Protect Privately Owned Open Space*

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# Steering Committee Scope of Work

Three Tasks (*each lasting six months*):

1. Update the definition of “publicly accessible open space”
2. Evaluate methods of pursuing new publicly accessible open space
3. Building on the work of the “Open Space in New Development” discussion, provide guidance for new development’s contribution to publicly accessible open space where it is not already guided by the small area plan

**Deliverable:** Publicly Accessible Open Space Policy Plan



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# Continuum of Open Space



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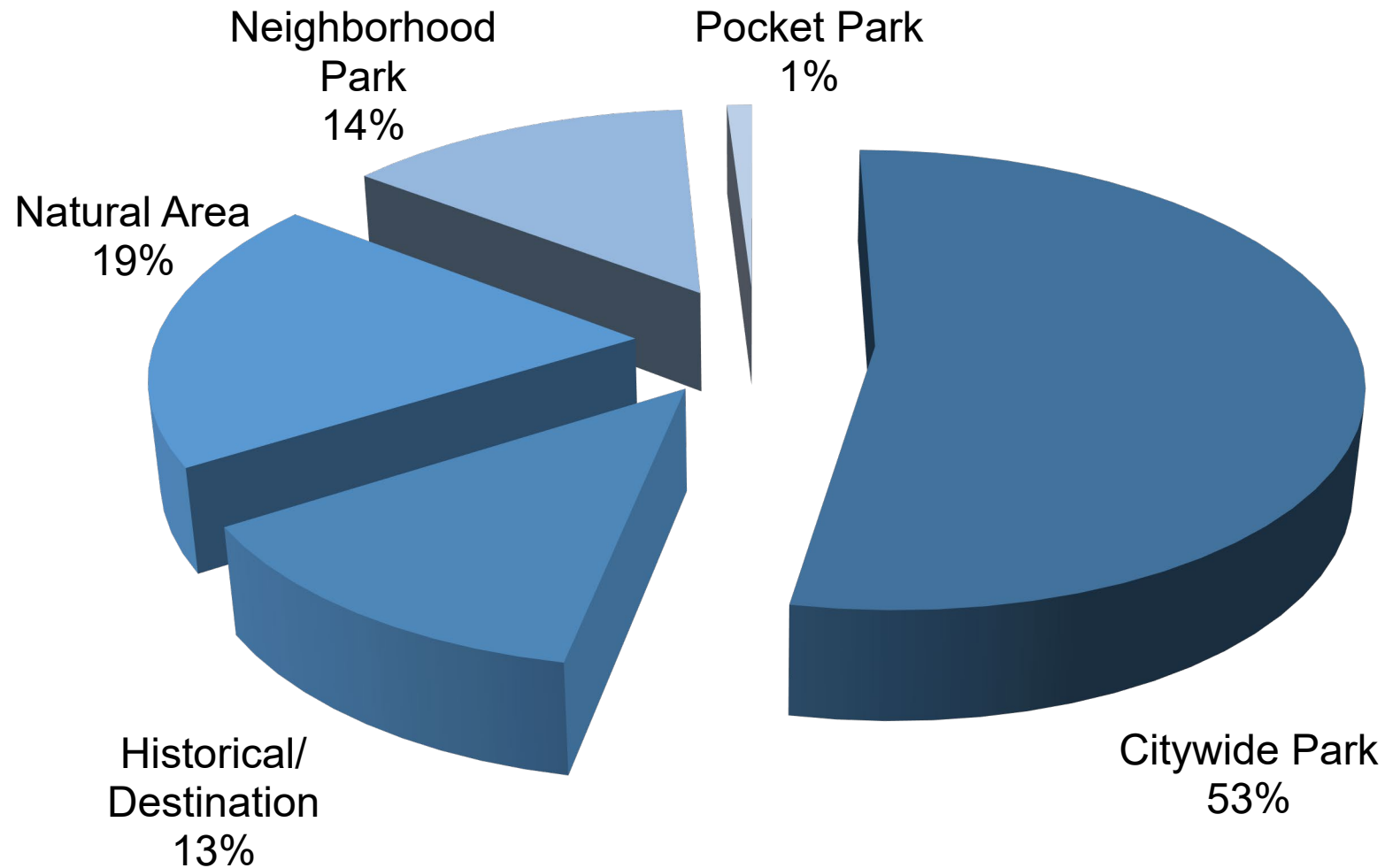
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## Next Steps





# City of Alexandria Open Space Typologies



- Introductions
- Elliot Rhodeside
- Review of Steering Committee Tasks
- Overview of "What is Open Space"
- Next Steps



# Zoning Ordinance

According to section 2-180 of the Zoning Ordinance, open and usable space is that portion of a lot at ground level which is:

- (A) Eight feet or more in width;
- (B) Unoccupied by principal or accessory buildings;
- (C) Unobstructed by other than recreational facilities; and
- (D) Not used in whole or in part as roads, alleys, emergency vehicle easement areas, driveways, maneuvering aisles or off-street parking or loading berths.

The purpose of open and usable space is to provide areas of trees, shrubs, lawns, pathways, and other natural and man-made amenities that function for the use and enjoyment of residents, visitors, and other persons.

*Note: The Zoning Ordinance does not distinguish between public, public-private, or private open space.*

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# Intent of Publicly Accessible Open Space

As stated in the Open Space Master Plan (2003, updated 2017), it is an investment in a higher quality of life for ourselves and future generations.

We seek to protect public open space because:

- **It connects the community:** Our parks and facilities are the public's common ground that equitably bring together our vibrant and diverse community.
- **It improves well-being:** Our programs and facilities motivate the community to make healthy choices and live active lifestyles through all stages of life and at all levels and abilities.
- **Its an investment in our environment:** Our commitment to natural spaces provides physical, mental, and community benefits, while offering opportunities to engage with and conserve our natural resources.



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# How do we measure open space?

- The Open Space Master Plan sets a target to maintain 7.3 acres of publicly accessible open space per 1,000 residents. This puts Alexandria on par with cities of similar densities.
- The target is currently being met and, given forecasted population growth, is expected to be maintained through 2025 with existing open space.\*
- If the City gains the 193 acres of public open space identified through approved small area plans, we expect to maintain the target through 2045.\*

\* Dates to adjust if the 7.5 EAP recommendation is adopted

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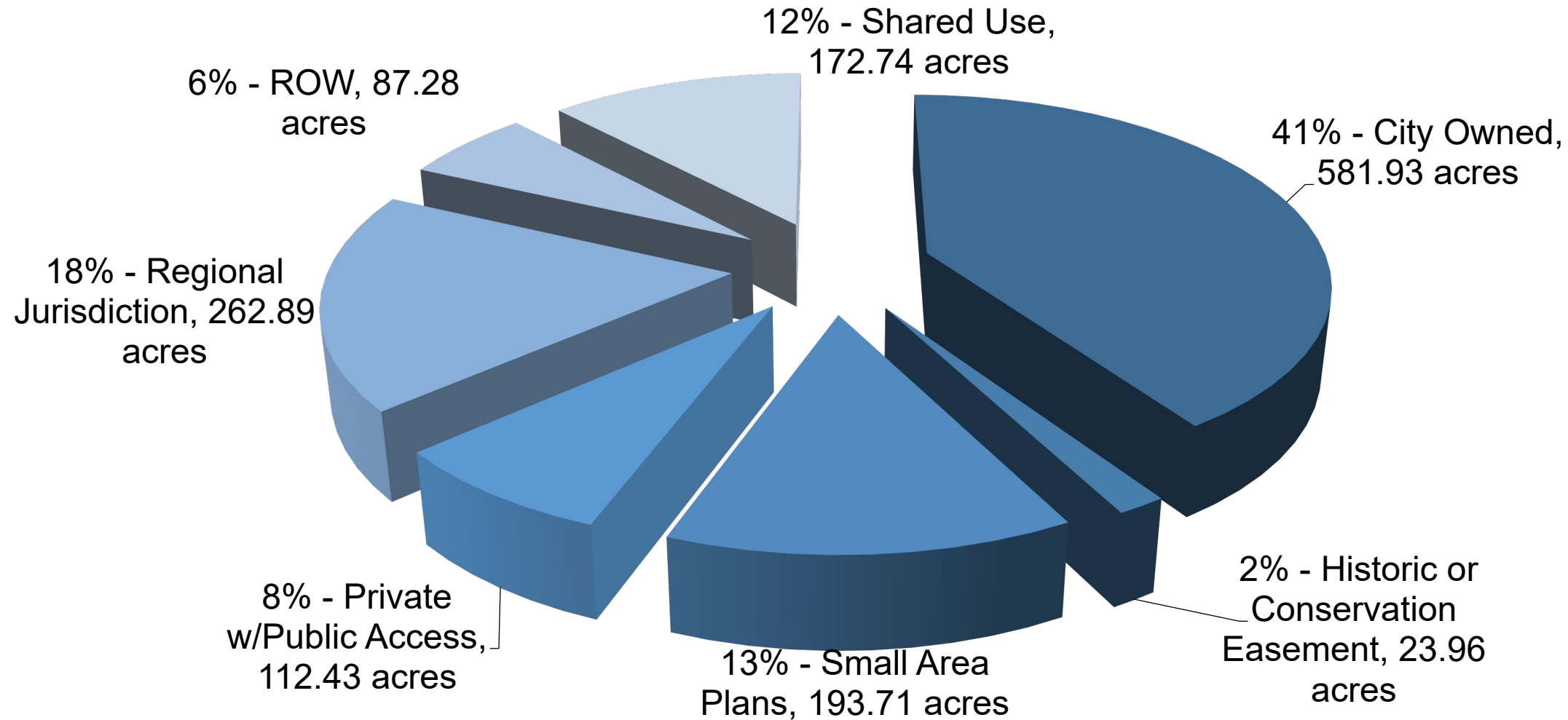
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# How much open space do we have?



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# How do we protect our publicly owned open space?

Public open space is obtained through:

- Acquisition using the Open Space Fund.  
*Land purchased with the fund is protected through the code established with the Open Space Fund.*
- Land donations
- Dedication in private development conveyed to the City



*5325 Polk Ave, acquired in December 2012 through funding from the Department of Defense (\$1.5m) and Open Space Fund (\$400,000)*

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# How do we dedicate publicly accessible open space?

1. Small Area Plans, and CDD zoning requirements within those planning areas, designate the amount of open space that private developments are required to protect for public use.
2. Once a site in the Small Area Plans is up for development, there may be a public access easement provided on the site or dedication of land.



*Potomac Yard Small Area Plan, Open Space Plan*



# How do we dedicate publicly accessible open space?

- If a development cannot meet its required open space in the CDD because of site constraints, there are two options that the City and developer may agree to a monetary contribution for:
  - A one-time contribution to improve a nearby open space that is predicted to see increased use as a result of the new development
  - A one-time or on-going contribution to a maintenance fund for a nearby open space that is predicted to see increased use as a result of the new development
- Some Small Area Plans require that developments contribute to an Open Space Fund to acquire future public open space.



*Montgomery Park Dog Park, Renovated through Development Contributions in 2012*

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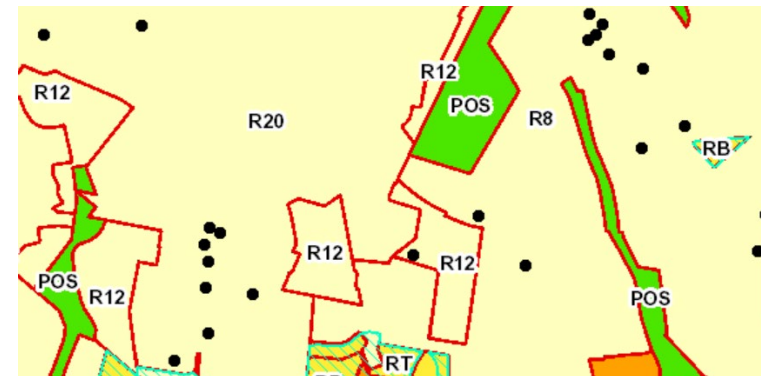
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# Zoning

- Most public open space is zoned POS (public open space).
- The POS zone is intended to preserve and enhance Alexandria's publicly owned open space and recreational areas and to protect the natural and developed amenities they possess by allowing only that development which respects and is consistent with those amenities.
- Most public-private parks are not zoned POS and their zoning varies based on the development.
- Not all public open spaces are zoned POS.



# What makes a quality publicly accessible open space?

On City owned sites, Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities develops park plans based on a biennial needs assessment, community feedback, market trends, and environmental impact.

**Discussion:** What is quality open space?



*Founders Park*

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# Next Steps

- Update the definition of “publicly accessible open space”
  - Provide a recommendation for updating and clarifying the definition of what types of publicly accessible open space (use, type, function, and extent of public accessibility) “counts” toward the City’s public open space goals. This would provide guidance on easement language (how much and what forms of public access must be provided for it to count) and future policy changes.
  - Provide a recommendation for updating the “Public Open Space” (POS) zone to reflect modern park and recreation functions, such as: play features, lighting (trail lighting, safety lighting, athletic lighting, etc.), ballfield amenities, etc.
- Next Meeting: Tentatively – May 7 at 7pm, with advance information for review in April
- Steering Committee Chair

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